

# Prehistory and Protohistory at The Second International Conference-Seminar on Asian Archaeology (SICSA)

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## INTRODUCTION

WHEN THE Editor of *Asian Perspectives* invited me to report on the Pre- and Proto-Historic Section of SICSA, held in Ceylon in 1969, I felt that the summary which I gave at the end of the sessions would best serve the needs of international scholarship. It is an introduction to the original material, which is scheduled to be published in a single number of *Ancient Ceylon*, the bulletin of Ceylon's Archaeological Survey. I have extracted and presented data in a clip-and-paste manner. Contextual explanations are available, for the most part, in extant publications.

## SUMMARIES OF PAPERS PRESENTED

### *Prehistoric and Protohistoric Archaeology*

*By B. B. Lal (Archaeological Survey of India)*

Dr. Lal's paper was the presidential address of the Pre- and Proto-Historic Section. It summarized the archaeological discoveries in India since 1961.

1. Central India appears to have been the meeting ground of the sub-Himalayan chopper Palaeolithic and the South Indian Acheulean.
2. Four coastal peneplains occur from Madras northward to Nellore. The associated industries ranging from the Early Stone Age to the Middle Stone Age have been sorted out.

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3. Implementiferous and fossiliferous river terraces occur in the Belan valley of Uttar Pradesh.
4. The East Indian Neolithic appears to possess a second phase with straight-sided shouldered adzes resembling those of Southeast Asia.
5. A field which had been cross-ploughed was discovered in a pre-Harappan stratum at Kalibangan. The practice of cross-ploughing persists today in this area; it is employed for the simultaneous sowing of multiple crops.
6. Ochre Coloured Ware has not been found in typical habitation strata. It occurs in a weathered and comminuted form in deposits that appear to have been laid by natural agencies.

*Some Features of Especial Interest in the Skeleton and Culture  
of Ceylon's Extinct Stone Age Human Homo sapiens balangodensis*

*By P. E. P. Deraniyagala (ex National Museums, Ceylon)*

The general prehistory of Ceylon, with particular emphasis upon the Balangoda Culture of the Late Stone Age, was the subject of this paper.

1. Carpidoliths indicate two phases of heavy precipitation intruding into an arid period during the Holocene. This view is substantiated by pedological observations.
2. Climatic fluctuations in Ceylon were probably influenced by the periodic influx of Antarctic water into the sea around the island.
3. An Australopithecine tooth was found in a Pleistocene alluvial gravel at Ratnapura.
4. The complex of physical characteristics of Balangoda Man adequately differentiates him from other extinct races and entitles him to the subspecific status of *Homo sapiens balangodensis*.
5. Bone darts appear to have been employed to kill Balangoda Man at Bellanbandi palassa.
6. Drilled lithic "mace-heads" have been found in alluvial deposits at Ratnapura.
7. Metal-using races, chief of whom were the Sinhalese, interbred with Balangoda Man to produce the Vedda aborigines of Ceylon.

*Malayan Prehistoric Chronology*

*By Al Rashid bin Mohd. Ibrahim (National Museum, Malaya)*

1. The Tampanian is probably of second glacial or interglacial age.
2. The Hoabinhian has survived into the Buddhist period.

*New light on the Mesolithic Period in India from  
Excavations at Bagor, Rajasthan*

*By V. N. Misra (Poona University, India)*

Microlithic industries in India have a very wide distribution covering nearly the entire subcontinent. They occur in widely different ecological zones—the semi-arid

lightly wooded areas as well as areas of heavy rainfall and fairly thick vegetation. But because of uneven exploration some areas are better known than others. Our knowledge of the way of life of microlith-using peoples and the chronology of microlithic industries is, however, limited because only a few sites have been excavated and even fewer have yielded materials other than those of a stone industry. In this context excavations made by Poona University and the State Department of Archaeology, Rajasthan, at Bagor in the Bhilwara District of Rajasthan have thrown considerable new light on the mesolithic culture.

The Bagor habitation occurs within a sand dune. It comprises three cultural phases.

Bagor phase I has yielded C-14 dates ranging from 4480 to 3285 B.C. Microliths and food remains comprising vertebrate remains are most profuse during this phase, suggesting a hunting-gathering economy. The microlithic industry is geometric and possesses a strong blade component. None of the animals appear to have been domesticated.

Stone paved floors, circular hut outlines, and one extended human burial were among the finds.

Phase II yielded C-14 dates of 2765-2110 B.C. The numerical decline of microliths and bones and the appearance of pottery for the first time together with saddle querns suggests a transition to food production. The pottery is sophisticated, but cannot be related to any other Indian assemblage. Perforated stone mace-heads, stone and bone heads, and copper tools appear for the first time during this phase. Some of the copper tools resemble artifacts from the Harappan Civilization which appear to have evolved from lithic prototypes found farther to the west. Three human burials in flexed postures were excavated.

Phase III retains traces of the microlithic industry despite the introduction of iron artifacts, glass beads, baked bricks and tiles, stone walls, and wheel-made pottery. A single extended human burial was found. This phase probably possessed full-fledged food production. On archaeological evidence it would seem to have persisted until the beginning of the Christian era or even a little later.

### *The Metal Technology of the Indian Protohistoric Cultures : Its Archaeological Implications*

*By D. P. Agrawal (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Bombay, India)*

Mr. Agrawal discussed the copper-bronze technology of the Pre-Harappan, Harappan, Copper-Hoard and Chalcolithic (Banas, Malwa, and Jorwe) cultures of India.

1. In metal-forging the Harappans were the most advanced; then came the Copper-Hoard and lastly the Chalcolithic cultures.
2. The Harappans used deliberate arsenic, lead, and tin alloying; the Copper-Hoards were of unalloyed copper; and the Chalcolithic artifacts were made of lead or lead and tin alloys.
3. The Rajasthan copper ores were probably used by both the Harappan and Chalcolithic peoples.
4. The Harappan, Copper-Hoard, and Chalcolithic cultures appear to have been independent phenomena occurring in three different ecologies.

*The Nature of Soil as a Governing Factor in the Regional  
Settlement Patterns of Ancient Ceylon*

*By C. R. Panabokke (Soil Survey, Ceylon)*

1. The first civilized settlers of northwest Ceylon would soon have been forced to abandon the area due to the poor fertility of the soils of this area. They would thus have penetrated into those areas of the dry zone that possess a Reddish Brown Earth soil cover, which is now known to possess a good chemical fertility.
2. The Reddish Brown Earths were suited to slash-and-burn as well as to irrigated agriculture, although unlike the Indian Red Earths, they could not have supported the dense populations mentioned in Ceylon's ancient chronicles.
3. The breakdown of the highly integrated irrigation systems in the Reddish Brown Earth regions led to the decline of Ceylon's historic civilization.
4. The latosols have developed under a wetter climate than prevails today. Their vegetation cover is more sensitive to climatic change than that associated with the Reddish Brown Earths.

*Had the Arabian Gulf Civilizations an Indian rather  
than a Mesopotamian Origin?*

*By G. Bibby (Prehistoric Museum, Denmark)*

Dr. Bibby provided the following summary of his paper:

1. In the 5th millennium B.C. a hunting culture of Eneolithic character, with tile arrowheads, occupied eastern Saudi Arabia.
2. In the early 4th millennium Ubaid communities arose, probably under influence from Mesopotamia, though the possibility of an Arabian origin for the Ubaid culture cannot be totally rejected.
3. In the early 3rd millennium a culture using red bag-shaped pottery spread from mainland Arabia to Bahrein, and was there fertilized by Umman-Nar settlers bearing a culture which arose in Abu Dhabi under influence from Kulli and early Indus (Early Dilmun I).
4. Out of the mixture arose the chain-ridge culture, still under Indus influence, which introduced the idea of stamp-seals and the Harappan weight system (Early Dilmun II). Contact with Mesopotamia was at this stage established, and gradually became dominant.
5. The Barbar culture (Early Dilmun III) developed out of the chain-ridge phase, under mainly Mesopotamian influence.
6. The thousand-year lacuna between Ubaid and the earliest Dilmun culture has yet to be filled.